h McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1893 NU31 Ser(NU31

then killed him with stones. This modified statement, also, Señor Encinas duly communicated to me. 124

Still later, in collecting linguistic material through the first interpreter with the assistance of Señor Alvarez-Leon, I received in the subject incidentally (or at least ostensibly so) on two or three occasions, partly with the view of verifying or disproving the current report that the men were eaten by the Indians; and since the first distrust on the part of the interpreter and the companions (by whom he was commonly surrounded) had worn off, the questions were answered freely and with apparent truth. In brief, the information gained in this way was a repetition in general terms of the statement of the killing of both men; but the responses indicated (1) that the Indians are not cannibals, (2) that they do not eat any portion or portions of the body of an enemy slain in war, (3) that they do not eat human flesh in a sacrificial way, and (4), specifically, that they did not eat the flesh of the two white men killed last spring. I am disposed to give credence to all of these statements. 648 [266]

Señor Encinas informed me that for a long time after the reputed killing of the two Americans on the island the Seri were exceptionally shy and were seldom seen on the mainland; that the first representatives of the tribe to appear were one or two old women who came to his rancho with much trepidation; that these representatives being not ill-treated, a man appeared, who was also well treated, and that still later other members of the tribe appeared, though it was only a few days before our visit that any considerable body of the Seri Indians showed themselves at their favorite mainland haunt on his rancho. It was his first communication with the Indians since the killing, and, both he and they agreed, the first confession of the crime outside of their own tribe. 648

While in Sonora various conflicting accounts of the affair were given me. One, to which I was disposed to attach credence by reason of the character of my informant and his explanation of the circumstances under which the information was gained, was given me (just before the visit referred to above) by ex-Consul Forbes, of Guaymas. This account corresponds in all essential details with that scavenged by my party by the Indians, except that, according to Mr Forbes' account, the survivors were altogether unarmed after the borrowing of the rifle by the Indians, and that when the men in the boat arose suddenly and shouted he pointed at the Indians not a gun but a stick, in the hope of deceiving them thereby, as he was fortunate enough to do. 115 124 648

It may be added that the Seri Indians are at the same time the most primitive and the most bloodthirsty and treacherous of the Indians of North America, so far as my knowledge extends; also that their character is well known throughout Sonora, and indeed generally throughout Mexico, Arizona, and the southern part of California. I was assured by the acting governor of Sonora and by the prefect of Hermosillo that it would be little short of suicide for even a Mexican official to visit these Indians or land on their island without an armed guard. Through conference with the Indians, also, I learned that any white man, Mexican, or Indian of another tribe coming in contact with them is killed without the slightest compunction, unless they are restrained by fear. Accordingly I am satisfied that the character of the Seri Indians is quite as bad as the unsavory reputation they have acquired throughout the Southwest. 181 648

It should be observed that while the Indians were unable to give the names of the men killed, their description of race and vessel agreed exactly with those of the newspaper correspondent Robinson and his companion, and with the sloop *Evanista*; and Mr Forbes' information was obtained direct from the survivors of the expedition of which Mr Robinson had charge. There can then be no doubt that it was Mr Robinson and his companion who were killed by these Indians, and whose killing was confessed by them, as set forth above. 124 648

With great respect, your obedient servant,

W J McGee,
Ethnologist in charge.

Honorable S. P. Langley,
Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

186 pitiful case of Fray Cristobal Gil, and oftentimes rising explosively
648 beyond the feeble control of the untrained mind; for the impulse of enmity toward aliens is an ever-present possession—or obsession—of the tribe, and a reflection of that race-sense which is their most distinctive attribute.

726 Of open warfare and face-to-face fighting there is hardly a germ among the Seri. When themselves ambushed or surrounded, some of their stouter warriors have in a few instances faced the foe for a few minutes at a time, as is shown by the annals of Cerro Prieto; yet this accidental attitude but betokens the play of chance rather than the plan of choice. Concordantly, the folk avoid the method of warfare (so common among other Amerind tribes as to be properly considered characteristic) involving open duel between chiefs and other warriors; they seem to be devoid of that sense of fairness in fighting which finds expression in the duel; and despite the individual advantages growing out of gigantic stature, immense strength, and superior swiftness, they habitually seek to combine in numbers against panicked or baffled enemies, just as their hunters throw themselves mercilessly on surrounded quarry. Of open boldness or confident prowess no trace appears; and the body of facts seems to justify the prevailing Sonoran opinion that the warfare of the Seri is treacherous and cowardly in design, craven and cruel in execution.

Once begun, the conduct of the fray by the Seri fighters is fairly uniform; the warriors either discharge clouds of arrows from their coigns of vantage, or rush to brain their victims with stones, or to break their necks and limbs and crush in their chests, as in the slaughtering of quarry; and according to the tale of the occasional survivors—Señor Pascual Encinas and his son Manuel, Don Ygnacio
[115] Lozanía, Don Andrés Noriega, Don Jesus Omada of Bacuachito, and Don Ramon Noriega of Pozo Noriega, are among the survivors and informants; also the sturdy Papago fighters, Mariano, Anton, Miguel, and Anton Castillo (whose sister died of dread while he was on the 1895 expedition)—the rushing warriors are transfigured with frenzy; their eyes blaze purple and green, their teeth glisten through snarling lips, their hair half rises in bristling mane, while their huge chests swell and their lithe limbs quiver in a fury sudden and blind and overpowering as that of springing puma or charging peccary. Of the successful assaults the ghastly end is rarely recorded, though whispered large in the lore of Sonora; in the unsuccessful assaults recounted by survivors the blood-frenzy burned but briefly and died swiftly as the disappointed warriors skulked silently behind rocks and shrubs, or fled across the sands with inconceivable fleetness. These details of battle precisely parallel the details of butchery of beastly quarry, as recounted by local observers and corroborated by Mashém's recitals.

266 So far as can be ascertained the parallelism between frenzied battling
727 and furious butchery in the chase affords the chief basis for the firm

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

Sonoran belief that the similarity extends one step further, and that the human victims are rent and consumed, like the beasts. There is a lamentable lack of data concerning the alleged anthropophagy of the Seri; on the one hand there is the deep-seated local opinion, generally growing stronger as the tribal territory is approached, and agreeing so well with the hunting customs, the thaumaturgic arrow-poisoning, the zoomimic handicraft, and zootheistic faith, and especially with the pervading fetish-piracy of the folk, that its validity would seem inherently probable; on the other hand, there is not only a dearth of specific positive testimony, but hacendero Encinas (best informed among Caucasians concerning Seri customs) and several of his vaqueros reject the prevailing belief, while Mashem consistently repudiated the custom, both in general and in particular, and in ceremonial as well as in economic aspects, whenever and in whatever way the subject was approached during his intercourse with the 1894 expedition. On the whole, the much-mooted question of Seri cannibalism must be left open pending further inquiry, with some preponderance of evidence against the existence of the custom.

The war-frenzy of the Seri fighters is significant in its parallelism with the blood-craze of the chase, and even more so in its analogy with the warpath customs and ceremonies of most Amerind tribes and many other primitive peoples. In typical tribes the warpath custom is a most distinctive one, standing for an abnormal state of mind and an unaccustomed habit of body, perhaps to the extent of an extreme exaltation or obsession akin to intoxication, in which the ordinary ideas of justice and humanity are inhibited; among most tribes the condition is sought voluntarily and deliberately when occasion is thought to demand, and is superinduced by fasts and vigils, exciting songs and ceremonies, and related means; while among certain tribes the aid of symbolic "medicines", which may be actual intoxicants, is invoked. Thus the savage on the warpath is a different being from the same man in times of peace; viewed from his own standpoint, he is possessed of an alien and violent demon, usually that of a fantastic and furious beast-god whose rage he must symbolize and enact; viewed from the standpoint of higher culture, he is a raving and ruthless maniac whose craze is none the less complete by reason of its voluntary origin. The warpath frenzy is one of the fundamental, even if little understood, facts of primitive life, and the character of the savage tribe can not properly be weighed without appreciation of it. Now, the Seri blood-craze seems measurably distinct in two ways: in the first place, it expresses a more profound and bitter enmity toward aliens than is found among most savage tribes—i. e., it is instinctive and persistent in exceptional degree; in the second place, it is more spontaneous and explosive in its culmination when conditions favor than among tribesmen who induce the condition by elaborate preparation—i. e., it is dependent on the swift-changing hazard of warfare in exceptional

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

is what their "shirt" (McGee, pl. 29) probably was. The fabrics of McGee's Mexican informant may refer to gunny-sacks made over into improvised imitations of civilized garments; or to single-element carrying bags. It is entirely possible that contact with the cloth-weaving tribes of Sonora long ago induced the Seri to shrink from habitual complete nudity; but it is difficult to imagine them producing even a coarse wearable cloth. McGee's interpretation of the historic sequence of Seri garments is of course wholly speculative.

The cradle shown by McGee (p. 226, fig. 30) consists of a kite-shaped hoop with eight sticks tied across it and a lashing thong passed back and forth across it half-a-dozen times. Even allowing for some slip of the parts in transport to Washington, this specimen is quite typical in Seri disregard of evenness, neatness, order, or finish. The Yaqui cradle illustrated by Hrdlička[1] consists of eight or nine lengthwise sticks or canes twined close together. The Lower Californians used a basket or a turtleshell. The Gila Pima and river Yuman cradle is of "ladder" type, and therefore similar in structure to the Seri except that it lacks the point at the bottom and has the sides parallel; it also carries a hood of wickered or twilled splints. As regards basic structure, one form of Maidu cradle is most similar to the Seri; just as the plan of the Yaqui one reappears among Miwok, Yokuts, and Mono a little further south in California.[2] It appears from this irregular distribution that so simple an apparatus as the open or flat baby-carrier, which can be just as serviceable without a definite technique or style entering into it, is likely to vary locally without much significance, and that its forms will indicate historic connection only when they are parallel in a number of details. In these respects it resembles house types. In both these objects, new "inventions," certainly of detail elements and perhaps of basic structure, seem to be readily made and adopted.

McGee's finding (p. 247) that the Seri are "not habitual stone arrow-makers" has a parallel among the river Yumans, and, at least partially, among the remaining Sonoran tribes. His conclusion (p. 259) that the *yerba de la flecha* (magot, Sebastiano bilocularis?) was an Opata but probably not a Seri arrow poison, seems sound. The plant was shown me on the island, and the Seri knew it as venomous, but volunteered nothing as to using it on arrows.

That the question of Seri cannibalism must be left open, with a preponderance of evidence against the practice (p. 263), also seems a conservative judgment.

As to shields, McGee learned of loose pelican pelts and turtle-shells (p. 264), I of armor and a large upright shield of hide. Both accounts may be right, one referring to emergency pick-ups, the other ——— to prepared defence or attack.

[1] AA 6, pl. 9, 1904.
[2] BAE-B 78:838, fig. 48, pls. 36, 46.

S:Davis & Dawson F-8 (1922-1940) 1945
MU31 Sari MU31

lation, but as the Ishmaelites of America they brought misery and death upon themselves by an unwavering belligerence toward all outsiders. The history of their centuries of bitter contest against the forces of law in Sonora is a bloody one, but whatever has been the extent of their wanton looting and murder, there is one crime of which they have long been unjustly accused. Sonora is full of legend and tale of "los canibales," [266] but no convincing evidence has ever come to light proving that the Seris ever practiced cannibalism. Of course, it could be argued that the only ones who might have proved it were killed and eaten.

[p. 202(B)]

[pp. 203-260 have no material relating to the Seri.]

000 possible for producing domestic crops of any kind. There is no water
312 for irrigation, and drinking water is very scarce, rising in only a few parts of the Island in places known only to the Indians.

648 For centuries these nomads of the wastes have borne an evil repu-
[49] tation as killers and cannibals, and many an expedition to the Island for trade or exploration has never left its beautiful shores. Lured away from their boats by friendly gestures of the Indians, every last man has been killed by arrow or rifle and the expedition never heard from. No survivor has ever returned to relate his experience and, up to the time of my visit, a man risked his life to go among the Seris on their Island.

Time after time, for four hundred years, the Spaniards, and later the Mexicans, have tried to exterminate them. They have been ambushed, hunted, killed on sight for years; diseases have decimated them: they have been the Ishmaelites among the native tribes of Mexico, with every man's hand against them. Now only a small remnant survives.

[13] They have also taken heavy toll of those who have invaded their territory, which at one time extended from Altar on the north to Guaymas on the south, and from Hermosillo to the coast. When hard pressed, they retired to their Island sanctuary where, deep in the rugged ranges, they have defied pursuit. They are strong, brave, neither asking nor giving quarter in battle---men of marvelous endurance, tireless walkers, swift runners, wonderful trackers.

Within the last few years the Government has definitely set aside Tiburon as their exclusive home and sanctuary, with a strip along the mainland as their hunting and fishing ground, and where they can harvest the fruits of the giant cacti without fear of being killed. No person is allowed on this Island without special permission from the Governor of Sonora, or their Superintendent and devoted friend, Roberto Thomson. The Government has declared a permanent closed season on Seris.

175 As to the reputation of these nomads of the wastes of being can-
648 nibals, I quote the following extract from the *Life of Bill Fain:*

266 After I had been in Yuma some time, a Yuma school teacher asked what I knew about Tiburon Island and the Seris. He said he had heard there was gold on the Island and he in company with a sailor intended to go down there. I said "Partner, I have been at the head of the Gulf several times, and interviewed many Mexican sailors and fishermen. These Seris are murderers and cannibals and my advice is, don't go, for as sure as God made little apples, you and your friend will make a fine feast for the *Tiburones.*"

He said the sailor would manage the boat and they would prospect on the Island and pack the gold out. And besides, they were going unarmed and trust themselves to the tender mercies of the most treacherous Indians in North America. I told him, "My advice is to stay just as far away from that Island as you can, if you want to teach school any longer." My advice was thrown away.

Some weeks later several mining men in skirting the coast opposite Tiburon, came across a place where the Seris had evidently been feasting on human flesh,

175
648
266

near the narrow channel called *Infernillo*. They knew about the missing school teacher and sailor and without doubt this was the place where they had been eaten. There were the bones of two human beings, and there seemed to be a sort of cross, with hands severed at the wrists, nailed to the ends of the cross with big spikes, with a piece of leather, about as big as a dollar, to keep the nails from pulling through. The hands were from a white man, and many scattered papers from a valise near by, with the man's name stamped on it, was ample proof that the remains were those of the Yuma teacher and this sailor friend. The holes cut out of the valise fitted the leather washers. Even the bones were broken to extract the marrow. The teacher never showed up and everything happened just as I predicted. This was about 1893.

About a year after this, five other men left Yuma in a boat, called the *Examiner*, for Tiburon. Clark was an old frontiersman, O'Brien was a good man too, but not so old at the game; Charley Cowles was a mining man and the two *Examiner* reporters wanted to write up the Seris and the Island and hunt deer. All were fully armed. I gave Clark and O'Brien the same advice as I gave the school master and said on no account to all desert the boat; for O'Brien to make some excuse and stay in the large boat with a shot gun loaded with buckshot and land the reporters with the small skiff. I told Clark not to land but to stay in the skiff. I said they were all flying in the face of sure death once they landed. Charley disembarked at the mouth of a river and left for the interior.

When the boat got close to the Island, it was anchored according to my instructions and Clark and the reporters got in the skiff and were rowed close to shore, when the reporters jumped out and waded. Twelve or fifteen wild natives had emerged from the brush and were making signs of friendship and they shook hands all around with the reporters. One of the men could talk Spanish and he asked about deer and one of the Indians pointed to the mountains of the interior and said, "*Si Senor, bastante venado.*" So they all started inland and were soon concealed by the brush.

Of course, even two men fully armed and good gun men, would stand no chance with that number of wild natives.

Soon after they had disappeared around the point of a hill, the men in the boats heard the crack of a gun, followed by the scream of a man in mortal anguish. The men never showed up and Clark started for the big boat in his skiff. About this time, a great buck Indian started out in a dugout canoe to cut him off. O'Brien had kept himself concealed until the Indian came within range, when he raised up and threatened to shoot, and waved him back.

He went back all right, and as soon as Clark came aboard, they raised the anchor and sailed south to Guaymas, sold the boat and returned by train. They gave me the details as here recorded. Friends of the newspapermen took the matter up with the authorities at Washington and they had some diplomatic exchanges with the Mexican Government. Mexico answered: "If you don't want your Americans killed, keep them away from Tiburon."

[*Life of Bill Fain*, unpublished manuscript from the Davis collection.]

About 1893 George Porter and John Johnson fitted out the small sloop *World* in San Diego, to go down in the Gulf for shells and curios, and trade with the Seris. They came to grief in the same way. The men were lured ashore by the friendly attitude of the natives, led up the beach, then retreat cut off and they were shot down and "eaten by the Seris."

Dr. [W J] McGee of the Smithsonian Institute of Washington, in 1895, visited the Island with a party of scientists to study the

[text continues on p. 146]

175 698 266 Indians. Dr. McGee, confirming Bill Fain's story of the disappearance of Robinson and Logan, the San Francisco newspapermen, secured the facts from a Seri who spoke Spanish, as follows:

> On reaching the Island, Robinson and Logan asked the natives if there were any deer to be shot and receiving an affirmative reply, they started for the interior toward the mountain with several Seris as escort, leaving the two other men with the boats. On the face of it, this was a most foolhardy performance and Robinson actually loaned his rifle to one of the Seris, who accompanied him. The Seri shot Logan in the back and wounded Robinson who called for help. In trying to escape he stumbled and fell and the Indians beat his brains out with rocks.

On the Gulf Coast, this list of killed and of course eaten, could be greatly enlarged and leads to the fact that, up to recent years, no stranger---American, Mexican or Indian---could land on Tiburon and live. Ever since Sonora was settled, two or three hundred years ago, the Island has borne a sinister reputation and up to recent years, it has lived up to its reputation. Even now, no one is allowed to land on the Island without permission of the Governor or the Superintendent.

[193] The Island of Tiburon is isolated, its approaches guarded by deserts and sea, and its people the wildest and most primitive race in North America---every man's hand against them, and they against every body.

175 648 266 114 Dr. McGee's investigations in 1895 failed to convict the Seris of cannibalism or of eating any part of either whites or Indians, killed on the Island or killed in battle. This reputation of cannibalism is prevalent in Mexico as well as in the United States, but the charge has never been proven.

It is true, they eat the flesh of animals raw as well as partially cooked, and that may have given rise to this gruesome reputation, but my own investigations covering several visits on the Island and on the Sonoran coast, failed to convince me that they had eaten human flesh. They told me themselves they had not, and if all reports of cannibalism by the Seris were traced back to their source, they would end in surmise or guesswork. No one, so far as I have been able to find, has actually seen a Seri eat human flesh. Until such a witness can be produced, the Seri remains unconvicted.

Let us examine the so-called evidence of the mining men, as quoted by Bill Fain: the finding of a white man's hands spiked to a cross, and the schoolmaster's papers scattered on the Gulf Coast of Sonora. This evidence is too circumstantial. The discs of leather even fitted the holes in the bag.

In the first place, nails are scarce in Sonora, and no Seri at that time would risk his life to procure nails or spikes at any ranch. Nearly all woods in that region are hard and would almost certainly turn a nail. The Seris had no axes to chop trees to make crosses, and

if they were as hungry then as they are today, they would not stop to spike a man up preparatory to serving him. Their only tools then were rocks to use as hammers and hoop iron for knives, and these are in universal use today.

There is no doubt that the men were killed, but I think these mining men purposely exaggerated their findings, if any.

There is no doubt that the Seris were brave fighters, treacherous murderers, sparing neither men, women or children on their raids, killing ruthlessly. But there is one charge which cannot be brought against them, which cannot be said of many tribes north of the border. So far as I could find out, they never tortured nor scalped.

The Seris never took prisoners and they never inter-married with other tribes, so their strain is pure.

There was one exception. Sixty or seventy years ago, the Seri Chief Coyote Iguana and his band of warriors held up the stage between Hermosillo and Guaymas, and killed all except a handsome Spanish girl of the better class. This girl, Coyote Iguana made his wife and by her raised a family. One granddaughter still survived in 1924, and while more attractive than the general run of Seri, her complexion was fully as dark.

The Seris, Ishmaelites among the native tribes of Mexico---the most fascinating Indians in North America!

Reception Committee, Tiburon Island - 1938

On the twenty-fifth of April, nineteen twenty-two, I engaged the services of Roberto Thompson, who with his father and grandfather

[text continues on p. 149]

242 Burro meat comes first in their estimation, then mares, then steers, but they take what they can get and no questions asked. Burro deer or black tail is a great article of diet, and these deer are on the Island. Wolves and coyotes are on the Island also. I do not think they eat them.

• 266 As I have said, the Seris are reputed to be cannibals, or to have been. Since those who furnished the meals cannot speak, it is a matter not entirely proven.

648 199 There is a war on between Mexican fishermen and the Seris. The Seris are wild for boats and will do almost anything to get one, so two years ago a chance occurred and they killed seven drunken Mexican fishermen and seized their boat. Last summer, some fishermen surprised the Seris, killed one, and recovered the boat. They mourn this boat a lot more than they do the dead man.

648 Twenty or thirty years ago, Governor Ysabel came here with some troops to capture some Yaquis who had joined the Seris. The Governor told the Chief he would have to give up the Yaquis, as they were outlaws. The next day the Seris brought in six right hands. They said they had killed the Yaquis. Asked how and why, they said they had killed them while they slept and they wanted their guns. They cut off the right hand of each as proof.

With all their apparent friendship, we never go without arms. When we sleep our rifles are alongside of us, and we wear our revolvers with us. Sometimes we roll in with our clothes on. But they have never, by sign or act, shown anything but friendship.

851 123 197 A baby boy about four months old was in camp, so Rafael Ysabel baptized him and gave his name Rafael, and presented him with a little gold cross of which his mother was very proud. She held the baby while he poured a little precious fresh water over its head and repeated:

"In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I name thee Rafael. . ."

123 Curious black eyes follow us always. When we eat, the Seris often squat around us and watch every mouthful. If there is any bread, gravy, grease, beans or meat left over, we pass it on and they certainly clean up.

While we eat, the waves are always lapping on the shore upon which many pretty shells are thrown by the tide, besides water-worn pumice stone in all sizes down to a small marble.

Our meals are very simple. We bake biscuit in the dutch oven for every meal, cook turtle meat, if we have it, or beans or rice or spuds.

[text continues on p. 171]